

(b) if so, the reasons therefor;

(c) the number of applications pending at the end of December, 1996 in each of the passport offices, separately;

(d) whether steps have been taken for speedy disposal of pending applications;

(e) whether the Government propose to open some more passport offices in the country for the speedy disposal of pending applications; and

(f) if so, the details thereof, State-wise?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI I.K. GUJRAL) : (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) Delay in issue of passports is normally due to reasons such as receipt of negative or incomplete reports from concerned police authorities, discrepancies in documents submitted by applicants particularly in respect of applications received by post, lack of response from applicants who are asked to submit additional documents.

(c) A statement is attached.

(d) The Government are committed to streamline the working of Passport offices for expeditious issue of passports by augmentation of staff strength, upgradation of office facilities including computerisation, review of systems and procedures in order to reduce delays, regular inspection of Passport Offices and follow up action.

(e) and (f) The opening of new Passport Offices is based on certain parameters such as the location of existing Passport Offices, inflow of applications from a particular region in the context of the recommendations of the Standing Committee of Parliament for External Affairs that there must be at least 50,000 applications per annum from an area for a new Passport Office to be opened. At present, there is no proposal to open any new Passport office, besides the new offices at Vishakhapatnam, Ghaziabad, Pune and Thane.

Statement

S.No.	Office	Total Pendency as on 31-12-1996
1	2	3
1.	Ahmedabad	16049
2.	Bangalore	6600
3.	Bareilly	5497
4.	Bhopal	3185
5.	Bhubaneshwar	3725
6.	Bombay	13217
7.	Calcutta	11578
8.	Chandigarh	10923
9.	Cochin	7914

1	2	3
10.	Delhi	19455
11.	Goa	713
12.	Guwahati	3128
13.	Hyderabad	30156
14.	Jaipur	8600
15.	Jalandhar	11069
16.	Kozhikode	22368
17.	Lucknow	24311
18.	Chennai	18233
19.	Nagpur	1457
20.	Patna	9245
21.	Trichy	22769
22.	Trivandrum	11590
23.	Jammu	13131
		274913

Shortage of Eye Specialists

3407. SHRI MANIKRAO HODLYA GAVIT : Will the Minister of HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE be pleased to state :

(a) whether Government are aware that one out of five visually handicapped people in the world live in India and in more than four-fifths of these cases, blindness could have been avoided, say experts;

(b) whether there is a shortage of eye specialists in the country;

(c) if so, the details thereof; and

(d) the reaction of the Government thereto?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE (SHRI SALEEM IQBAL SHERVANI) : (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) There are about 8000 Eye Specialists in the country who are providing eye health care services in the country.

(c) and (d) Does not arise.

New Ports

3408. SHRI K. KANDASAMY : Will the Minister of SURFACE TRANSPORT be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Government propose to open new ports in the country in near future; and

(b) if so, the details with locations thereof?

THE MINISTER OF SURFACE TRANSPORT (SHRI T.G. VENKATRAMAN) : (a) and (b) No Sir, there is no proposal to open new ports in Central Sector. The State Governments are free to grant permission to open new ports either under the public investment programme or through private sector.